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ACTION SCS-06

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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FOR ARA/CAR TUMMINIA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC

SUBJECT: CONDITIONS AT PEOPLE'S TEMPLE MISSION

REF: A. STATE 006183 B. GEORGETOWN 0233

BEGIN SUMMARY: TWO VISITS TO THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY (JONESTOWN) IN NORTHWEST GUYANA. CONVERSATIONS ALONE WITH A NUMBER OF THE PERSONS LIVING THERE, AND INQUIRIES OF GOG LOCAL OFFICIALS WHO VISIT JONESTOWN FREQUENTLY, HAVE CONVINCED CONSUL THAT IT IS IMPROBABLE THAT ANYONE IS BEING HELD IN BONDAGE OR AGAINST THEIR WILL AT THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE COMMUNITY. CONSUL HAS EITHER MET WITH OR PERSONALLY OBSERVED APPROXIMATELY 500-600 OF THE 800 PEOPLE RESIDING THERE. THEY APPEAR HEALTHY, ADEQUATELY FED AND SATISFIED WITH THEIR LIVES. SOME DO HARD MANUAL LABOR IN THE FIELDS SUCH AS IS NORMAL FOR FARMERS, BUT APPEAR TO BE WORKING VOLUNTARILY AND UNDER NO DURESS. END SUMMARY.

1. CONSUL HAS NOW VISITED TWICE THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY (JONESTOWN) IN NORTHWEST GUYANA. (MOST RECENT VISIT WAS ON JANUARY 11.) HE WAS TALKED WITH LOCAL GOG OFFICIALS WHO VISIT THE COMMUNITY FREQUENTLY. ON BOTH HIS VISITS THE CONSUL TALKED PRIVATELY

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WITH NUMEROUS MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE AND VISITED VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COMMUNITY. THE RESULTS OF THE CONSUL'S VISIT HAVE BEEN REPORTED EXTENSIVELY AS THEY RELATE TO INDIVIDUAL CASES. THIS MESSAGE SUMMARIZES HIS GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND IMPRESSIONS CONCERNING CONDITIONS AT THE COMMUNITY AND PARTICULARLY THE ALLEGATIONS THAT SOME MEMBERS ARE BEING HELD AT THE FARM AGAINST THEIR WILL.

2. THE CONSUL IS CONVINCED ON THE BASIS OF HIS PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONVERSATIONS WITH PEOPLE'S TEMPLE MEMBERS AND GOG OFFICIALS THAT IT IS IMPROBABLE THAT ANYONE IS BEING HELD AGAINST THEIR WILL IN JONESTOWN. AT NO TIME DURING HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH PEOPLE'S TEMPLE MEMBERS DID HE SENSE THAT INDIVIDUALS WERE FEARFUL, OR UNDER DURESS OR PRESSURE. THEY APPEARED ADEQUATELY FED AND EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH THEIR LIVES. SOME WERE ENGAGED IN HARD, PHYSICAL LABOR REPAIRING HEAVY EQUIPMENT AND CLEARING FIELDS, BUT THIS IS NORMAL WORK

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ON FARMS.

3. MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE APPEAR TO BE ADEQUATELY HOUSED IN SMALL DORMITORY STYLE HOUSES WITH A CAPACITY OF EIGHT TO TWELVE PERSONS. THE LIVING AREAS ARE ELECTRIFIED AND THERE ARE REFRIGERATION AND FREEZER FACILITIES FOR STORING AND PRESERVING PERISHABLE FOOD-STUFFS. THE COMMUNITY IS NOT YET SELF-SUFFICIENT IN FOOD BUT THEY HAVE ESTABLISHED A SMALL CHICKEN HATCHERY AND HAVE RECENTLY ACQUIRED 15 HEAD OF CATTLE AND 2 HORSES. THE FARM ALSO HAS A PIGGERY AND A CASSAVA MILL. ON HIS LATEST VISIT CONSUL SAW NEW ADDITIONS TO THE SAWMILL AND THE CARPENTRY SHOP. THE ORGANIZATION HAD A MEDICAL CLINIC WITH AN AMERICAN M.D. WHO GRADUATED FROM THE

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT IRVINE. THERE IS ALSO A MEDIC, SEVERAL NURSES AND A PHYSICAL THERAPIST. CONSUL WAS TOLD THAT THE CLINIC CAN DO BLOOD TESTS AND PERFORM EKG EXAMINATIONS. CONSUL WAS ALSO INFORMED THAT AN X-RAY MACHINE IS IN TRANSIT TO GEORGETOWN AND THAT THERE ARE COMPETENT X-RAY TECHNICIANS AT THE SITE.

4. CONSUL WAS ALERT TO POSSIBILITY THAT ATTEMPT MIGHT HAVE BEEN MADE TO STAGE A FAVORABLE SCENARIO FOR HIS VISIT, BUT GIVEN CONDITIONS AT THE COMMUNITY, DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS COULD HAVE BEEN DONE. WORK AND LIFE APPEARED TO BE GOING ON IN A NORMAL FASHION. PERSONS WITH WHOM HE TALKED IN PRIVATE -- SOME OF WHOM WERE THOSE ALLEGEDLY HELD AGAINST THEIR WILL -- APPEARED SPONTANEOUS AND FREE IN THEIR CONVERSATION AND RESPONSES TO CONSUL'S QUESTIONS. ALSO LOCAL GOG OFFICIALS WHO VISIT THE COMMUNITY FREQUENTLY AND OFTEN WITHOUT ADVANCE NOTICE TOLD CONSUL THAT THEY HAVE NEVER RECEIVED THE IMPRESSION THAT ANYTHING STRANGE WAS OCCURRING IN THE COMMUNITY. IN SHORT, THERE IS NO FIRM EVIDENCE AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT THE NUMEROUS ALLEGATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE.

5. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD DRAW UPON THE ABOVE WHEN RESPONDING TO INQUIRIES FROM CONGRESS OR OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES IN THE U.S. ABOUT CONDITIONS AT JONESTOWN. WE BELIEVE THAT TO RETURN CONTINUALLY TO THE COMMUNITY TO QUOTE INVESTIGATOR ALLEGATIONS OF AMERICANS HELD AGAINST THEIR WILL UNQUOTE COULD OPEN THE EMBASSY AND THE DEPARTMENT TO CHARGES OF HARASSMENT. ACCORDINGLY, UNLESS OTHERWISE DIRECTED, WE PLAN TO HAVE A CONSULAR OFFICER VISIT THE FARM QUARTERLY TO PERFORM ROUTINE CONSULAR SERVICES. AT THAT TIME THE CONSULAR OFFICER CAN ALSO FOLLOW UP ON ANY WELFARE/WHEREABOUTS INQUIRIES WITH MEMBERS AND RELAY FAMILY GREETINGS, ETC.

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